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Colby, columnist at odds in painting picture of CIA

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Syndicated columnist Jack Anderson and former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Colby painted two quite different pictures of the CIA Friday in separate appearances before the Minnesota Newspaper Association.

The association, meeting for its 110th annual convention, first heard from Anderson who began his speech by looking at the microphone and quipping, "It's always nice to speak into microphones you can see."

Anderson, whose "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column appears in these newspapers, accused the CIA of using a "Classified" stamp to censor material it doesn't want published.

While admitting "for the safety of our country" certain things should not be published, Anderson said, "It is the function of the press to look to the cancer permeating our government and report it."

He accused the CIA of impinging on that function by withholding news of "wrongdoings, corruption and boners it wants kept secret."

Said Anderson, "The CIA won't give out the information, claiming it's classified. I maintain they put two per cent of the secret stuff in with 98 per cent news the American public is entitled to know."

Until news about CIA activities started breaking into the open, according to Anderson, "the CIA and certain government agencies were operating in a subterranean world of half-lights — plotting murders, committing burglaries, tapping telephones illegally and violating the law. We let sunlight in just in time."

He added, "When the CIA talks about national security, it's really talking about political security."

Colby, at a press conference immediately following Anderson's speech, was asked if the columnist was correct in saying the CIA had exercised censorship.

"Recommendations I've made for legislation prove that neither I nor the CIA advocate press censorship," he said. "I simply believe there should be greater discipline put on those whose jobs are to keep secrets."

Colby, a St. Paul native, said leaks of classified information have endangered CIA dealings with foreign countries. "The feeling is we aren't able to keep secrets," Colby contended.

The CIA has been maligned, Colby asserted, "by being focused down upon for a few specific things instead of being looked at overall."

He described the 28-year-old CIA as "the best service there is in the world" and said he is writing a book that will present the CIA "in contrast somewhat with the sensational treatment it's been receiving."

Colby also said he will submit the book to the CIA for clearance.

During the past year, Colby related, "The investigation of the CIA has had its costs — leaks — as well as its profits — bringing intelligence operations clearly under the law and the Constitution."

He said he expects now that "Congress will be more energetic in overseeing the CIA, and there are ways provided in our Constitution to review any mistakes that might be made." The problems the CIA is having with public distrust, Colby noted, "stem from the past when intelligence was kept totally secret. Now that its operations have been brought into the open, the role of the CIA needs to be explained to the American public."

Asked afterward if he's seen the movie "Three Days of the Condor" that delves into fictional CIA foul-ups, he commented, smiling, "Thought I'd pass that one up."



Anderson



Colby